

Female Condom

Where can you get female condoms?

Female condoms are available without a prescription at many locations: drug stores, school health clinics, Planned Parenthood, public health department clinics, community service offices (CSOs) and other community health clinics, etc.

How the female condom works:

The female condom (Reality) is a soft, loose-fitting polyurethane sheath (pouch) that lines the vagina during sexual intercourse and provides a physical barrier. It provides protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

The Reality Condom has a soft ring at each end of the pouch. The ring at the closed end is used to put the condom into the vagina. The larger ring stays outside the vagina and gives some protection to the labia and the base of the penis during intercourse. Follow the package instructions for insertion; the drawings can help show you how to put it in.

How to use the female condom:

- It can be inserted up to 8 hours before intercourse.
- Take the female condom out of its package.
- Hold the pouch with the open end hanging down. Squeeze the inner ring together and slide the condom into the vagina.



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- Put your index finger inside the condom and push the inner ring the rest of the way into the vagina. Check that the inner ring is up past the pubic bone.
- The outer ring stays outside.
- During sex it is okay for the condom to move around. But if you feel the outer ring start to be pushed into the vagina, or if the penis starts to go up along the outside of the condom, STOP, take the condom out and use another condom.
- After sex, squeeze and twist the outer ring to keep the semen from spilling, and gently pull the condom out.
- Throw it away (don't flush it!).

Female and male condoms should not be used together; they can stick together, causing slippage or displacement of one or both.

Effectiveness rates:

If a female condom is used every time of sexual intercourse and always used the correct way (perfect use), the effectiveness rate is as high as 95%. Because women do not use the female condom every time or it is inserted or taken out incorrectly, the typical use effectiveness is 79% or lower; 21 women out of 100 could become pregnant within the first year of use.

Female condom use becomes more effective with practice in using it correctly.

Benefits of the female condom:

Polyurethane female condoms provide protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, as well as pregnancy. Because of the STI protection, female condoms decrease the chance of long-term infertility. Female condoms are easily available from many sources without a prescription. You can insert the condom up to 8 hours before intercourse. The polyurethane material is stronger and less likely to cause allergic reactions than the latex used in some male condoms.

Potential side effects or disadvantages:

You will need to practice to learn how to use this method correctly. Some women do not like worrying during sex that the penis may enter the vagina next to the condom; your partner must cooperate.

Some people may be embarrassed to obtain female condoms from a drug store or health clinic. Some people may be embarrassed to suggest or initiate using condoms because they think condom use implies a lack of trust or intimacy. To be effective, condoms must be used every time, so some planning ahead is necessary. Female condoms are more expensive than male condoms.

Potential risks:

No known health risks.

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